Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TUNIS 00474 201717Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9644
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEOBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0474

PARIS FOR LABATT

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, TS
SUBJ: BOURGUIBA ADDRESSES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL BUREAU AS FAITHFUL LINE UP IN SUPPORT OF REGIME

1. MARKING TWENTY-SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF REVOLUTION, BOURGUIBA ADDRESSED MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL BUREAU AT PRESIDENTIAL PALACE IN CARTHAGE AFTERNOON JAN 18. FILM OF EVENT WAS SHOWN ON EVENING TV NEWS AND SLIGHTLY POLISHED VERSION OF BOURGUIBA'S EXTEMPORANEOUS STATEMENTS WERE PUBLISHED IN ALL PAPERS FOLLOWING DAY. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT'S REMARKS WERE GIVEN USUAL PROMINENT COVERAGE IN TUNISIAN MEDIA, FOR MOST PART THEY CONSISTED OF FAMILIAR RECOLLECTIONS OF STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND EARLY DAYS OF REPUBLIC. BOURGUIBA MADE NO DIRECT REFERENCE TO CURRENT CONFRONTATION WITH UGTT BUT SOME OF HIS COMMENTS ARE PERTINENT TO EVENTS OF RECENT WEEKS.

2. THESE PHRASES APPEARED IN LAST THREE OR FOUR PARAGRAPHS OF
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 00474 201717Z

TALK WHICH LASTED OVER HALF AN HOUR. PRESIDENT EXPRESSED HOPE THAT "REASON WILL PREVAIL" AND THAT TUNISIANS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT GOVERNMENT CANNOT SATISFY ALL DESIRES OF POPULATION AT ONE TIME. IF ALL OF STATE'S RESOURCES ARE SPENT ON SALARIES, HE SAID, PRODUCTION WILL BE COMPLETELY PARALYZED. "THIS THE TUNISIANS MUST UNDERSTAND, ESPECIALLY NOW AS EXTREMISTS ARE LAYING IN WAIT TO TRY TO DESTROY THE STATE." BOURGUIBA IS QUOTED AS EX-

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

PRESSING HIS CONVICTION THAT THERE ARE "HIDDEN MOTIVES IN THE HEARTS OF SOME OF UNCONFESSED AND THAT SOME ONLY AWAIT MY DEATH TO CREATE A FAVORABLE CLIMATE TO MOVE INTO ACTION." (IN ORIGINAL TELEVISED VERSION BOURGUIBA WAS MORE SPECIFIC SAYING "CERTAIN COUNTRIES.") IF PROBLEMS EXIST NOW, HE ADDED, THEY ARE THE RESULT OF OUR PROGRESS AND SUCCESS. HE CLOSED SAYING THAT TUNISIA IS ON THE RIGHT PATH, AND THAT "WE NEED THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW THAT BOURGUIBA HAS UP TO THE PRESENT NEVER ERRED IN HIS DESIGN."

3. MUCH OF THE ABOVE IS FAIRLY STANDARD BOURGUIBAISMS. IT WAS ALSO POLISHED BY SOME JUDICIOUS EDITING, WHICH IS OFTEN DONE TO PUT HIS IMPROMPTU REMARKS IN AN APPROPRIATE CONTEXT WHEN PUT DOWN IN WRITTEN FORM. PRESIDENT'S DELIVERY WAS STRONG AND HIS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE WAS GOOD. WHILE MOST TUNISIANS WERE UNDBOUTEDLY GLAD TO SEE THE PRESIDENT LOOKING SO WELL, HIS REMARKS CAME FAR SHORT OF DIRECT INTERVENTION ON PART OF THE PRESIDENT WHICH SOME TUNISIANS HAD EXPECTED.

4. AT SAME TIME, OTHER NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CLOSER TO THE REGIME THAN UGTT HAVE MOVED TO RALLY SUPPORT BEHIND NOUIRA. NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NATIONAL FARMERS UNION (UNA) CLOSED ITS TWO-DAY MEETING JAN 18 WITH CLEAR ATTACK ON RECENT UGTT POLICIES. IT APPEALED TO ALL "AUTHENTIC AND HONEST LABOR UNION MEMBERS ATTACHED TO PRINCIPLES OF FARHAT HACHED AND WHO OPPOSE FASCIST MANEUVERS TO COME TO THE DEFENSE OF NATIONAL UNITY AND WORKERS' INTEREST." CONFIDENTIAL

COUNCIL ALSO EXPRESSED "FARMERS SOLIDARITY WITH AUTHENTIC LABOR UNION MEMBERS AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR BATTLE AGAINST SABOTEURS AND THOSE WHO SEEK TO PLUNGE THE COUNTRY BACK INTO THE ERRORS OF THE POLICIES OF THE 1960'S " (I.E. BEN SALAH). THE UNA NATIONAL COUNCIL CRITICIZED IN PARTICULAR THE EXCESSIVE DEMANDS AIMED AT PARALYZING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OFFERED ITS SUPPORT TO PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA AND THE MODEL OF SOCIETY TUNISIA HAS CHOSEN. UNA CONCLUDED BY CALLING FOR A CAMPAIGN TO "UNMASK THE TRUTH AND TO INTRODUCE DEMOCRACY IN ALL NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS."

5. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF TUNISIAN WOMEN (UNFT) ALSO PUBLISHED ON JAN 19 THE TEXT OF ITS COMMUNIQUE ISSUED JAN 17. WHILE IT REFRAINED FROM MAKING POINTED ATTACKS, UNFT WARNED OF DEVIATIONIST TENDENCIES AND EXPRESSED FULL SUPPORT FOR NOUIRA, BOURGUIBA AND PSD. COMMUNIQUE CLOSED WITH APPEAL THAT TUNISIAN WOMEN ACT RATIONALLY AND NOT ALLOW THEMSELVES "TO BECOME ENTRAPPED BY DESTRUCTIVE CURRENTS SEEKING TO FEED OFF THE ACHIEVEMENTS GAINED BY THEIR CHILDREN'S SACRIFICES."

6. COMMENT: OF ALL THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, UNA AND UNFT ARE TWO OF THE MOST STALWART SUPPORTERS OF THE REGIME. UNA IS HEADED BY MOHAMED GHEDIRA, A MEMBER OF POLITICAL BUREAU AND UNFT BY

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

FATHIA MZALI, A MEMBER OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND WIFE OF MINISTER OF EDUCATION. NATIONAL UNION OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY (UTICA) WHICH USUALLY FINDS ITSELF IN MOST DIRECT CONTRAST WITH UGTT, HAD ALREADY VOICED ITS SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT AND PARTY AT CLOSE OF UGTT NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING TEN DAYS AGO. NATIONAL STUDENTS UNION (UGET) IS ONLY NATIONAL ORGANIZATION YET TO BE HEARD FROM. IT IS RUMORED THAT UGET HOPES NOT TO HAVE TO TAKE A POSITION, IN VIEW OF STRONG BODY OF SUPPORT UGTT ENJOYS AMONG TUNISIAN STUDENTS.

7. COMMMENT: REGIME NOW SEEMS TO HAVE SINGLED OUT "THOSE NON-AUTHENTIC AND DIVISIVE ELEMENTS WHICH HAVE INFILTRATED UGTT RANKS" AS CAUSE FOR CURRENT TENSIONS, WITHOUT ATTACKING UGTT AS AN INSTITUTION OR HABIB ACHOUR AS AN INDIVIDUAL. (PARTY DIRECTOR CONFIDENTIAL

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SAYAH WAS QUOTED IN PRESS INTERVIEW JAN 18 AS SAYING THAT ACHOUR'S RESIGNATIONS FROM POLITICAL BUREAU AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE WERE SURPRISING, BUT MATTER IS ACHOUR'S AFFAIR.) IT ALSO APPEARS THAT THE REGIME'S STRATEGY IS TO SEPARATE SOMEHOW THOSE "NON-AUTHENTIC FORCES" FROM THE LARGER RANKS OF "DEMOCRATIC" UNION MEMBERS. THE GOVERNMENT CLEARLY WISHES TO REBUILD ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS LATTER GROUP, BUT IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT WHETHER THIS RELATIONSHIP WILL BE SOUGHT WITH A "SANITIZED UGTT" OR WITH ANOTHER NATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION CREATED FOR THE PURPOSE. WE SUSPECT THE GOVERNMENT'S PREFERENCE IS FOR THE FORMER. THE PSD CENTRAL COMMITTEE OPENS ON JAN 20 AND THIS MAY GIVE US THE ANSWERS.
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20 Mar 2014
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